

# The Central London Congestion Charging Scheme



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**1. Context**

**2. The scheme**

**3. Lessons  
learned**

**4. What next?**

# A clear problem in Central London...

- Largest urban area in Europe (7m+ population)
- Engine of UK economy
- 6 times more congested than any other UK city
- Average speed of 14 km/hr, slower than in 1903



**... with mounting pressure for change and no clear solution...**

- **Business claiming £2b/ year of lost productivity due to congestion**
- **No funding or political will for road expansion**



# **... and a new London Government in place with a clear mandate**

- Devolution agenda leads to 1998 creation of Mayor of London post**
- Detailed enabling legislation (1999, 2000)**
- Overt political strategy – Mayor ran on explicit platform of charging**
- Mayor's willingness to take political risk**





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# The zone: 8 square miles



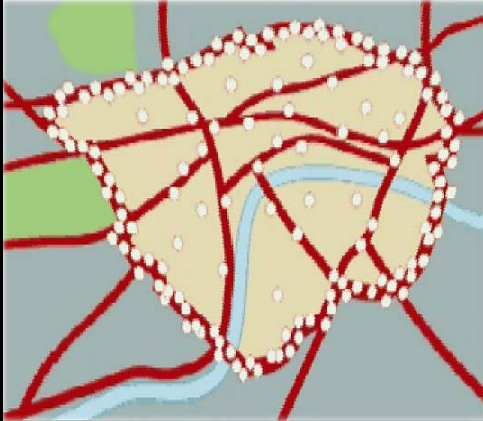
# The zone in context: only 1.3% of London

MAPS OF LONDON

Where exactly is  
the ongestion  
charging zone?  
Central London only.



# The system



- Automatic number-plate recognition (ANPR)
- 203 fixed camera sites
- Each camera has a 90% plate capture rate
- Data matched against payment database



# The charge

- £5/day (£8 as of July 2005)
- £100 penalty for non-payment
- Monday-Friday, 7 am-6.30 pm
- Do not need to pay before travel (and can pay up until midnight)
- Can choose to pay daily, weekly, monthly, or annually
- Main payment channels: Internet, stores, text messaging, telephone
- ~100,000 vehicles processed per day
- Exempted and discounted vehicles constitute ~30% of traffic



# 17 February 2003

Guardian Tuesday, 18 February 2003 - page 8

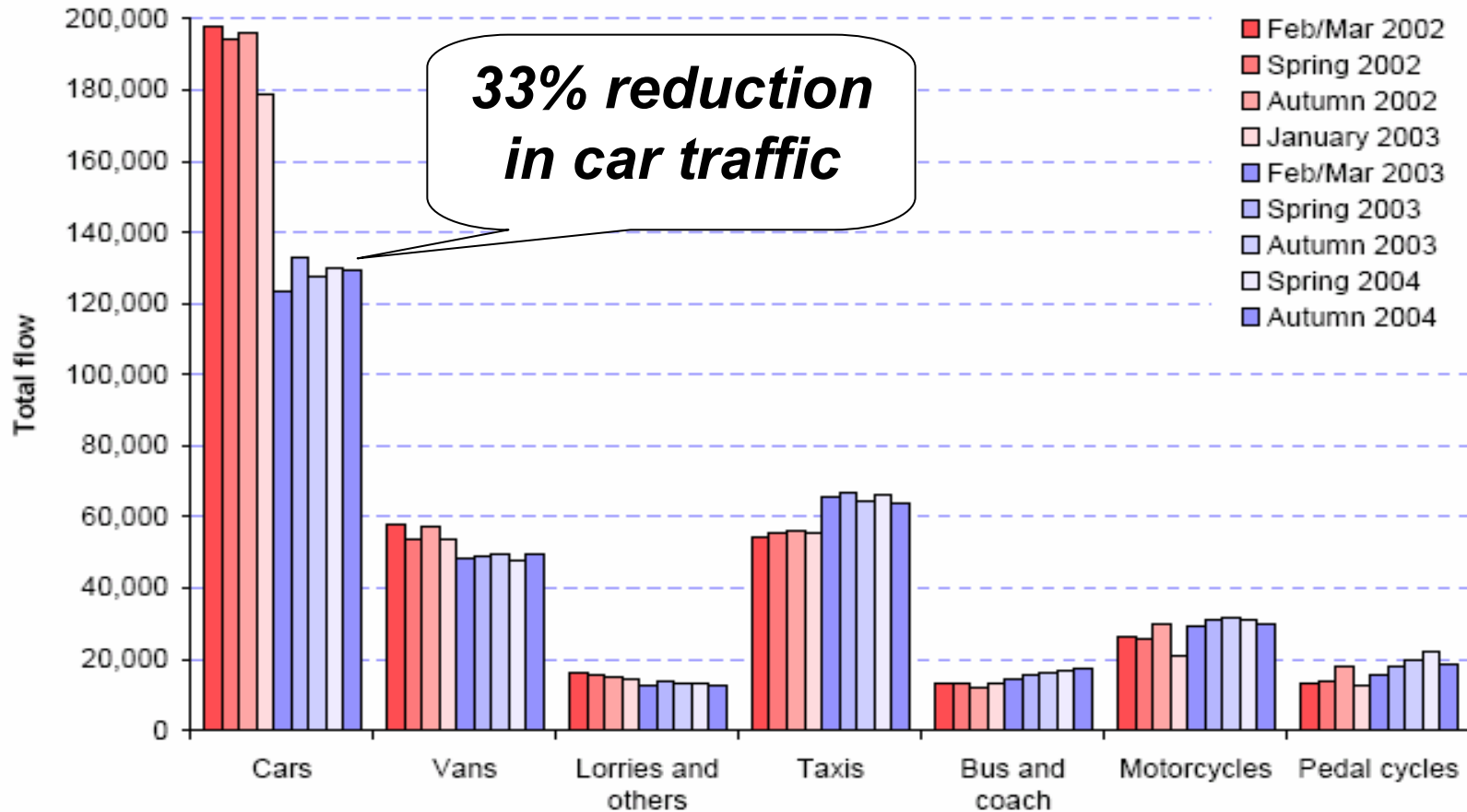
## Congestion charge



## Whatever happened to rush hour?

Dire predictions of C-day gridlock fail to materialise as commuters cruise into central London

# The impact



***~100,000 vehicles processed per day, exempted and discounted vehicles constitute ~30% of traffic***

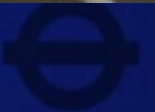
# Two years on: The major benefits have been sustained

- Total traffic entering zone down 18%
- Congestion down 30%
- Little change in number of trips to central area
  - 50–60% moved to public transport, 20–30% divert round zone, 15–25% other adaptations
- Net revenues of £100m/year
  - reinvested in transport



# Two years on: Other impacts also largely positive

- Improved bus service (reliability, speed)
- Decline in road accidents
- Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>
- Retail sector claims negative impacts on business and remains concerned





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# **10 key lessons: Getting it right from the outset...**

- 1. Real (and perceived) problem, combined with willingness to take political risk**
- 2. Clear policy objectives**
  - Supported by a strong fact base**
  - Articulated in simple terms: “Traffic levels like school holidays”**
- 3. Extensive public consultation and engagement to defuse initial opposition**



**...executing the launch with  
excruciating attention to detail...**

- 3. Strong and wide-ranging public information campaign**
- 4. Watertight (yet flexible) project management**
- 5. Baseline and extensive monitoring programme**
- 6. Significant, focussed investment in public transport and traffic management**



**... running the program with  
ongoing attention and flexibility**

- 7. Proactive contract management**
- 8. Fault-free back office**
- 9. Ongoing monitoring, stakeholder  
engagement and scheme improvements**
- 10. Being able to point to specific public  
transport investments**



# **Some interesting consequences of congestion charging**

- **Smoothing the path of broader debate on road pricing**
- **Discussion of need for other demand management measures (not just on roads)**
  - **Transport Secretary: “We can’t build our way out of these problems”**
- **Significant boost to Mayor’s profile and credibility (including with Government)**





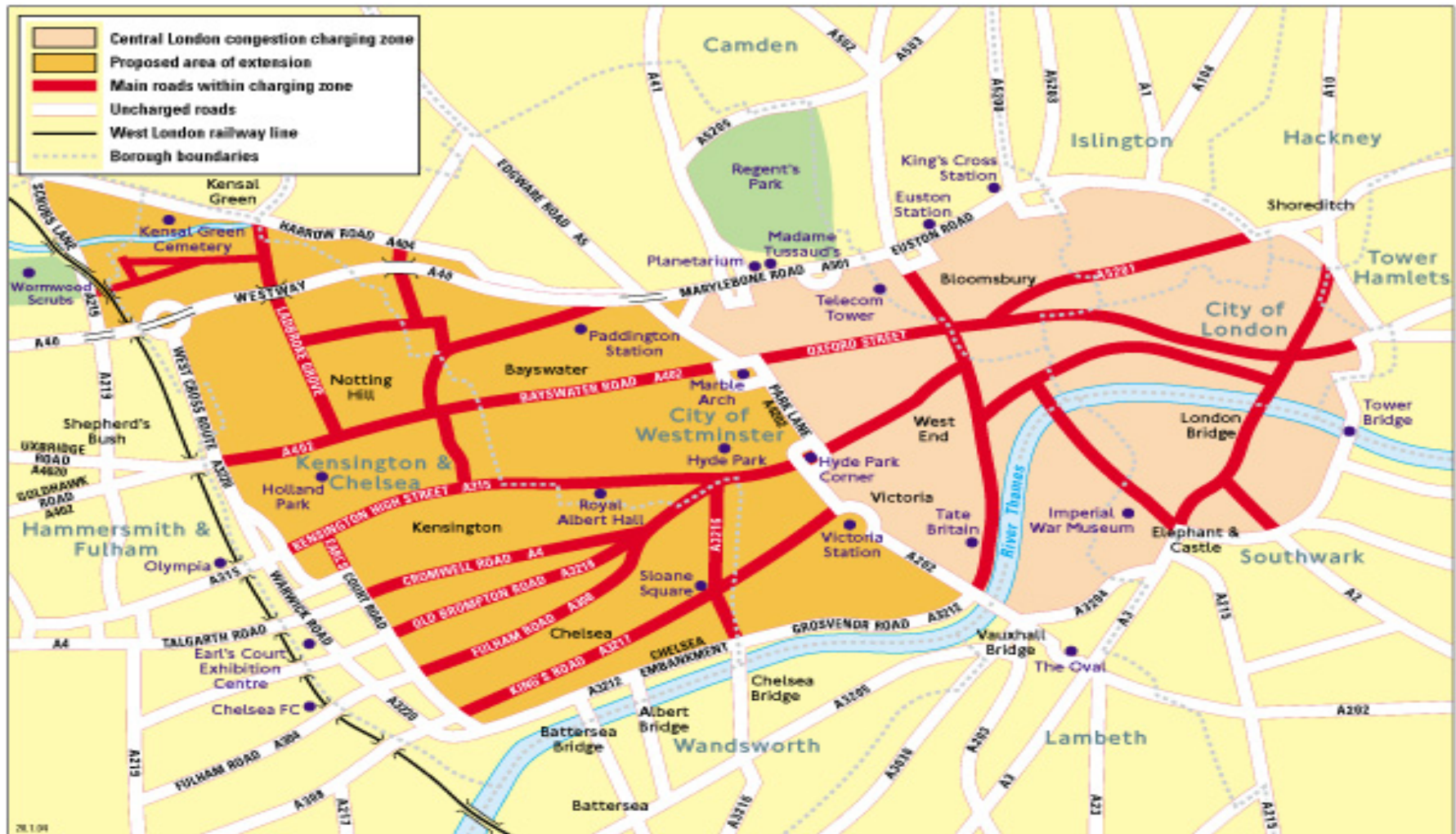
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**(February 2007 at the earliest)**



# Technology trials

- **Improved ANPR**
  - better detection, lower cost
- **Tag and Beacon/ DSRC**
  - positive results from pilots
  - indicates could be used by 2008/09
- **GPS, GSM**
  - unproven
  - not likely as an affordable solution in London before 2014)
- **Working with UK and Europe – ideally to one standard**



# Tag and Beacon



# **UK-wide road pricing?**

## **Government announcement 5 June**

- **Satellite-based 'pay as you drive' system**
- **Charge to vary depending on congestion level (up to £1.34/mile)**
- **Would largely replace current fuel tax**
- **Estimated increase in road capacity of up to 40%**
- **Pilots within 24 months, full scheme in a decade**



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